



The National Humanities Medal

by Robert M. Edsel



President George W. Bush greeting Robert Edsel and Monuments Men (from left to right) James Reeds, Seymour Pomrenze, Harry Ettlinger, and Horace Apgar in the East Room of the White House.
(Eric Draper, White House)

On November 15th, I had the honor of a lifetime to accompany four of the Monuments Men to the White House for the awarding of the National Humanities Medal. **The Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art** was one of only ten recipients. This is the highest honor our nation bestows for achievements in the arts and humanities.

Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dr. Bruce Cole, and Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Dana Gioia, were each present as the NEA also honored ten distinguished people with the National Medal of Arts at the same time. Both the NEH and NEA have been champions of our great project. In particular, Dr. Cole, and the NEH, played an instrumental role in the funding of the film, *The Rape of Europa*. It was a great moment for them to personally meet a few of the heroes of this story.

From the Desk of Robert Edsel

This year - 2007 - has been filled with so many remarkable events that words seem to pale in comparison to the photographs we have selected for the twelfth edition of the *Monuments Men Newsletter*. It has been a year of achievements, honors, and loss, all of which we have covered in our "Year in Review" article on pages 6 and 7.

While it is appropriate to pause and reflect on what has occurred, it is wise to also look ahead to 2008 and briefly mention a few of the exciting elements of this vast and noble project. On a personal level, I will be continuing to fulfill my primary objective: introducing the Monuments Men to the broadest audience possible by completing my next book by year end 2008. I also intend to introduce the documentary film, *The Rape of Europa*, to audiences outside the United States, in particular in Europe and Russia. Coming on the heels of the discovery of the "Hitler Albums," we have numerous new leads on possible stolen works of art and documents which I believe may result in further announcements in the year ahead.

In 2008 I will be concentrating on the growth of the Monuments Men Foundation in three primary areas: expanded board leadership, funding, and doubling the number of biographies compiled on the Monuments Men and women. In fact, progress in each of these three areas will be reported in the coming months' newsletters.

Without the support and encouragement of others, a year such as this would not have been possible. To everyone, we extend our most sincere "thanks."



Our day began with an opportunity to experience the majesty and history of the White House by way of the amazing photos of past occupants and important events that adorn the East Wing entry corridor. As we ascended the stairwell to the main floor, we passed the first of many of the presidential portraits. Our group gathered briefly in the Green Room where we had an opportunity to meet the other medal recipients. After all the invited guests were seated in the stately East Room, we were escorted to our seats; moments later the President and First Lady entered the room and the ceremony commenced.

At the conclusion of the ceremony we gathered for a group photo which included Mrs. Lynn Cheney, who was the Chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1986 - 1993. A beautiful reception followed which allowed medal recipients, family members and guests to mingle and absorb a moment in time that we will each cherish forever.



President Bush, the First Lady, Mrs. Cheney, and NEH Chairman Bruce Cole standing with the National Humanities Medal recipients in the Blue Room of the White House.
(Chris Greenberg, White House)



Making History by Preserving It

by Robert M. Edsel



*Chief Archivist of the United States, Professor Allen Weinstein and Robert Edsel standing before one of the two "Hitler Albums."
(Robert M. Edsel Collection)*

It was a distinct honor to, in conjunction with the **Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art**, donate to the Nation the "Hitler Albums." (Album 8 was gifted to the National Archives on November 1st; Album 6 will be delivered to the National Archives at a later date and until then, will remain in our possession). The "Hitler Albums" contain photographs of works of art that were looted by the Nazis during World War II which were subsequently presented to Adolf Hitler. Until the discovery of these two albums, only 39 such albums were known to exist, all of which entered the National Archives after the war. These 39 albums were in fact the "smoking gun" documents used by the prosecution during the Nuremberg Trials to convict the most infamous Nazi leaders including Hermann Göring, Alfred Rosenberg, and Hans Frank, among others.

Chief Archivist of the United States, Professor Allen Weinstein, characterized this discovery as "one of the most significant finds related to Hitler's premeditated theft of art and other cultural treasures to be found since the Nuremberg Trials. The National Archives is grateful to Mr. Edsel and the Monuments Men Foundation for today's donation of Album 8 which will allow scholars and historians immediate use of these materials."



Earlier this year, as part of our ongoing research into the Monuments Men, I was contacted by an organization that knew of our efforts who then introduced me to the heir of an American soldier who was stationed near Berchtesgaden in early May 1945. This soldier removed these two albums - the "Hitler Albums" - from Hitler's home, known as the *Berghof*. Albums 6 and 8 of the series, contain photographs of some of the earliest stolen works or art from many of the most prominent collectors in Paris at the beginning of the war - names such as Wildenstein, Kahn, Seligmann, and Rothschild, to mention just a few. We worked closely with the heirs to explain the importance of these albums based on our understanding of them at the time, and subsequently acquired them to ensure that they would join the other 39 such albums at the National Archives.

When I founded the **Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art** earlier this year, I was determined to honor the legacy of the Monuments Men and women by resuming the job they so remarkably performed more than 60 years ago. In addition to our ongoing research on the Monuments Men, which includes writing biographies and gathering photos of each member of this amazing group, we are also serving as a not-for-profit clearinghouse for people who believe they may have works of art or documents that were taken or even stolen during the war. The Monuments Men Foundation wants to illuminate the path home for other priceless treasures just as it did for the "Hitler Albums." This was a tremendous beginning for us.



Chief Archivist of the United States, Professor Allen Weinstein, and Robert Edsel after signing the agreement to donate the "Hitler Albums." Album No. 8 is sitting on the table in front of Professor Weinstein.

(Robert M. Edsel Collection)



A Great Nation and a Heroine: The United Kingdom and Anne Olivier Bell



*At Winfield House, residence of the Ambassador of the United States to the United Kingdom, with Anne Olivier Bell and Ambassador Robert H. Tuttle.
(Robert M. Edsel Collection)*

On December 3rd we gathered to honor the only known living British member of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section, Anne Olivier Bell. We were all invited guests of U.S. Ambassador Robert H. Tuttle and his wife Maria at Winfield House, a beautiful home originally built by American heiress Barbara Hutton, who later “sold” it to the United States for \$1. During a brief and private ceremony Anne was presented with a flag of the United States which had been flown over the Capitol building in her honor along with a copy of the gold leaf Congressional Resolution that was passed on June 6th, 2007 recognizing the service of the Monuments Men.

A more detailed article will be included in our next newsletter.



The Year in Review: 2007

Life is about people. This year they joined in celebration; they gathered with a shared interest to learn; they worked with us to make a vision become a reality. Some of the more notable events have been mentioned on the previous pages. However, many memorable moments took place in far more average and everyday settings involving people from all walks of life. It is a joy to remember them all, but in particular those that follow:

June 6th, 2007: Congressional Resolutions Recognizing the Monuments Men

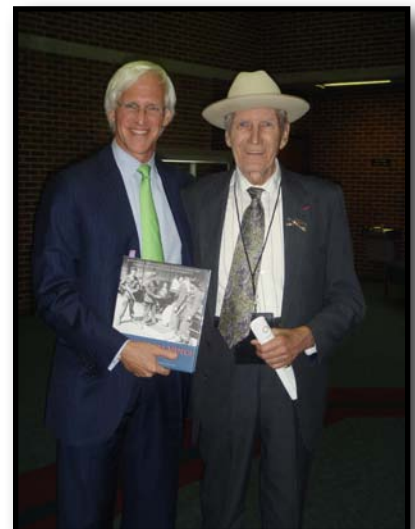


Eleven months of effort went into meetings with members of Congress to introduce the Monuments Men. I personally visited every Senate office and met with numerous Senators and members of Congress. Each embraced these remarkable men and women as evidenced by the record time in which these respective resolutions were passed. The ceremony, attended by members of Congress, representatives of ten of the twelve nations who had Monuments Men, and other distinguished guests was the proudest moment of my life.

Meeting Colonel Robert Hamsley

In the course of my travels this year I met thousands of people. Some were famous; many were not. All were drawn together because the story of the Monuments Men in some way touched their heart or resonated with a personal experience in their life. It is a very powerful feeling and a significant responsibility to have so deeply impacted another. Each person I met had a kind word, a story, or some piece of information which added to the mosaic we are building on the Monuments Men.

On a few occasions someone special emerged from the crowd, no one more so than Col. Hamsley, a decorated hero who saved the lives of 14 people standing before a German firing squad in France. Quiet and unassuming, Col. Hamsley drove to my speaking engagement in Chattanooga from his home in Lawrenceburg and was the last person in line to greet me. It is moments such as this that define who we are as an organization and why we are committed to honor such great men and women of all nations.





Congresswoman Kay Granger

This great leader was ALWAYS there for us. We had tremendous support from many members of Congress, but Kay Granger was the first. She and her staff helped us work through the system to draft and present both Resolutions. Kay Granger not only assisted with the presentation of honors at the Senate Ceremony, but she made a point of attending the National Humanities Medal Ceremony at the White House. When she greeted me at the head of the reception line after the medal ceremony, I wept.



Dr. Bruce Cole and the National Endowment for the Humanities



Bruce Cole and his remarkable team at the NEH - Thomas Lindsay, Mindy Berry, Carole Watson, and David Weinstein to name a few - have been supportive of our effort in numerous ways. In addition to the NEH being the largest grantor of funds for the documentary film, *The Rape of Europa*, they have quietly been keeping a watchful eye on our many efforts from behind the scenes. It was quite a surprise to receive the call from Dr. Cole informing us of the National Humanities Medal award. Only then was it clear just how closely he and his team had been monitoring our efforts. I'm reminded of a quote once spoken by the great actor, Anthony Hopkins: "Be bold and mighty forces will rise up to your aid." Bruce Cole and his team have been just such a "mighty force."

Speaking at The Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City

I lectured at more than a dozen locations across the country during the year to enthusiastic audiences of all age groups and backgrounds.

The Nelson-Atkins, however, had three prominent Monuments Men who were instrumental in "building" the museum: Paul Gardner, Laurence Sickman, and Otto Wittmann. For that reason, my time there was more like a "homecoming." Although I will always cherish the recognition of a standing ovation by the 550 people who attended my lecture, my fondest memory was seeing group after group of school kids enjoying the works of art. Museums and kids are such a harmonious combination.





Departed Heroes



Craig Hugh Smyth
(1915 – 2006)



S. Lane Faison, Jr.
(1907 – 2006)



Salvatore Scarpitta
(1919 – 2007)

We began our *Monuments Men Newsletter* in December of last year with the very sad news of the passing of Craig Hugh Smyth. As we close this remarkable year of 2007 we pause for a moment to reflect on the heroes who have left us in the past thirteen months.

S. Lane Faison, Jr. was a key member of the OSS Art Looting Investigation Unit that so thoroughly investigated the Nazis' looting and Hitler's plans for the Führer Museum. Craig Hugh Smyth was instrumental in making the Munich Collecting Point operational on just two weeks notice, an accomplishment no less daunting than opening a world class museum overnight. Salvatore Scarpitta, an artist whose work ranged from three-dimensional wrapped canvases that evoked survival and death to sculptural renderings of cars and sleds that extolled his belief in travel as a metaphor for life, helped with the protection of cultural treasures in Italy. All were heroes. All were Monuments Men. We honor their service by remembering.

UPCOMING EVENTS

TELEVISION BROADCASTS

CBS Sunday Morning January 2008
with Charles Osgood

PRINT APPEARANCES

Wall Street Journal Dec/ Jan 2008
Smithsonian Magazine February 2008
American Way Magazine February 2008

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Florida Atlantic University January 10, 2008
Yale University April 17, 2008
Ritchie Lecture Series
McNay Art Museum May 1, 2008

For comments on the *Monuments Men Newsletter*, please contact Elizabeth Ivy: eivy@monumentsmenfoundation.org